

Uncovering Ham Hill's past for its future

The National Lottery Heritage Fund project



Why do we need this project?

- Ham Hill is a well-used and well-loved Country Park that is being used by **increasing numbers of visitors**
- Ham Hill is an **important site** for archaeology, geology and wildlife
- Hamdon Hill is one of Europe's largest Iron Age hillfort and is designated a Scheduled Monument, since 2019 the Monument has been **designated 'at risk' by Historic England**
- The existing site infrastructure such as paths, signs, interpretation are **becoming tired and are in need of replacement**
- The Country Park is divided by the road through it with **concerns about traffic speed and visitors safety**
- The 164 hectare site has only two permanent on-site rangers, the support of **practical volunteers is essential** to maintain the site
- The Country Park does **not have a public facing facility** to welcome visitors to the Country Park
- To increase the number of rangers and maintain the Country Park in the future we need to **develop new sources of income and support**



Where are we now?

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) project developed in 2018 and 2019 with a pop-up museum and consultation held during the 2019 summer holidays.
- In March 2020 a first stage pass was secured from the Heritage Fund. This provided development funding and an 'in principle' grant of £1.3m towards the project cost of £1.62m.
- Since April 2020, and despite the challenges of the pandemic we have been developing the project and now have detailed proposals to submit to the Heritage Fund in May 2022 for approval and award of the full funding.



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What do we want to do?

The project has many, and interconnected aspects all focused on establishing Ham Hill as a well-managed, well resourced and welcoming place for visitors creating a sustainable future for the Country Park. The key projects are:



Provide additional staff and volunteers

Extra rangers, volunteers and Friends of Ham Hill.



Enhance the habitats and wildlife value of Ham Hill

Wildflower margins, tree planting, woodland management and grassland restoration.



Improve how we tell the stories of Ham Hill

Through visitor centre displays, leaflets, activities and information around the site.



Improvements on the highway

to make the road through Ham Hill safer. Including better crossing points, paths along the highway and new traffic speed limit.



Improve the welcome to Ham Hill

A new visitor centre with learning space and cafe.



Improve the archaeological condition of the hillfort

Removal of scrub on the ramparts and erosion repairs.



Provide opportunities for a wider range of people to enjoy Ham Hill

A wider range of and more activities and events for people to do.



Provide better facilities for staff, volunteers and visitors

More toilets, refurbishment of existing ranger centre.



Generate new sources of income to help better manage Ham Hill in the future

A new café, online donations and sponsorship opportunities.



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How will Ham Hill benefit?

- The scheduled monument and underlying archaeology will be protected.
- Biodiversity will increase and the wildlife on site will have more space to expand their populations. The wildlife will be better protected and have more resilience in a changing climate.
- The path network will be more resilient to visitors and suffer less erosion.
- Ham Hill will be cleaner.
- Ham Hill will be respected.



Who will benefit?

Ham Hill Country Park is primarily used by local people and this focus as an important community resource will continue. Our plans will enable us to better manage the site's heritage, provide a welcome for visitors (both new and current) and establish a financially sustainable model to better manage the site in future within a climate of limited funding.

The improvements to Ham Hill will be of benefit to all visitors. It will:

- be safer and more accessible
- provide new opportunities for people of all ages to visit and be involved
- provide welcoming new facilities

What will it cost and who is paying for it?



The importance of the site and the acknowledgement of what needs to be done, combined with the benefits from the proposed work has led to our successful first stage Heritage Fund application.

The £1.3m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant is subject to a successful delivery stage application and securing the match funding required and statutory permissions for any works.

South Somerset District Council has pledged £150,000 towards the £320,000 match funding.

We are also approaching charitable trusts and other funders, working closely with the Friends of Ham Hill.

We will also be developing opportunities for supporters of Ham Hill to contribute, including online donations and sponsorship.



When will it happen?

We intend to submit the second stage Heritage Fund application in May 2022 with a decision in September.

The project will then commence in October 2022.

Physical work on site will primarily begin in Autumn 2023 with the project lasting four years.

How to get involved



Survey



Volunteer

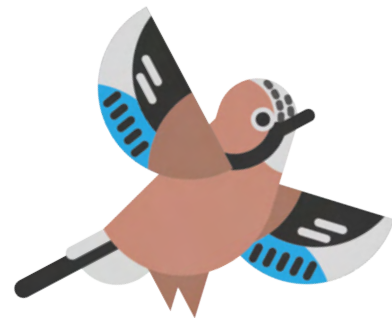


Contribute

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Landscape improvements



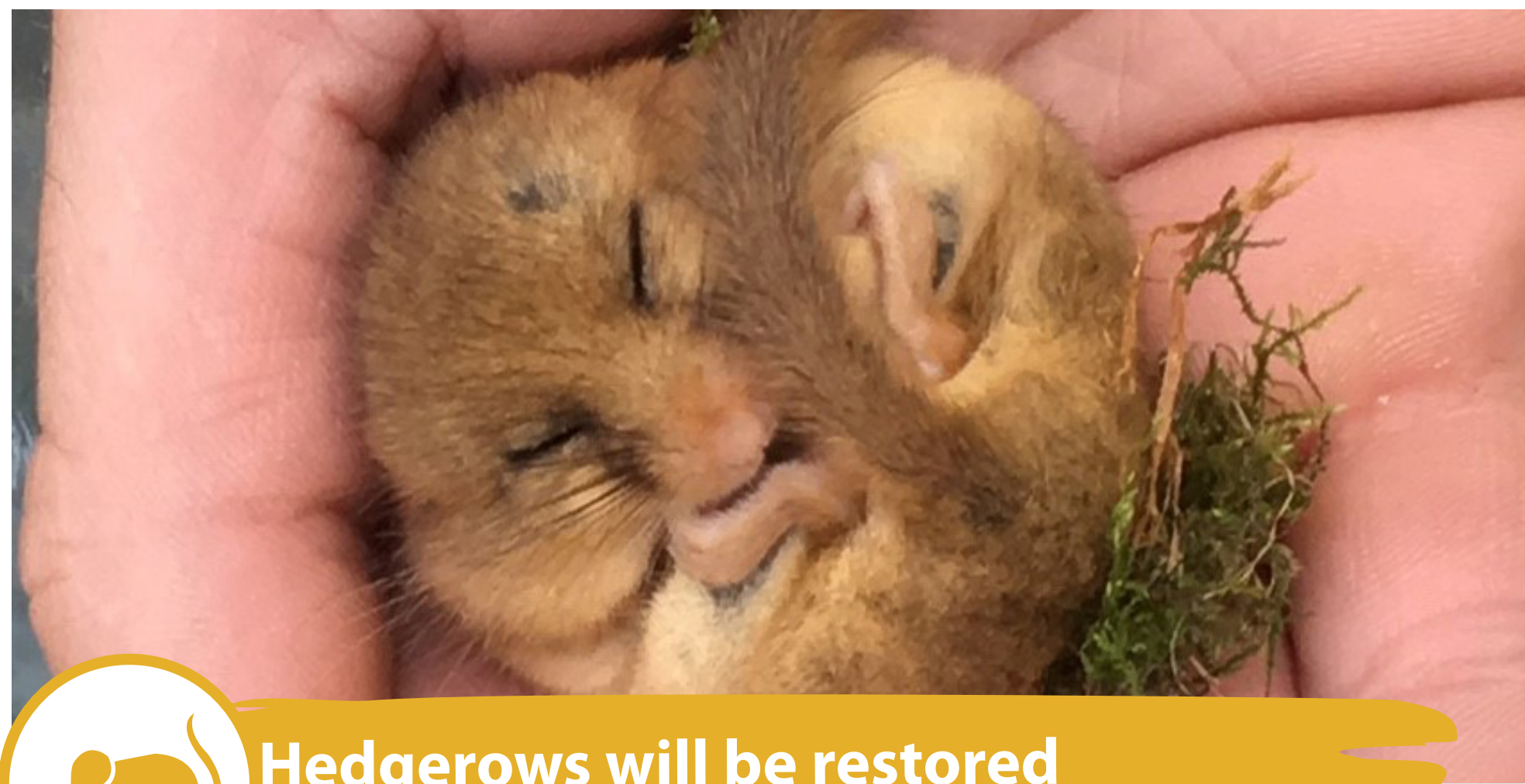
The map below shows an overview of our aspirations for the landscape to provide a well managed, better protected and biodiverse site.



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Habitat improvements



Hedgerows will be restored

Existing hedgerows will be strengthened by planting up gaps and providing a better habitat and network for birds and dormice.



Improvements to the margins around the flat fields

A native calcareous mix of wildflowers will be sown to support a wider variety of insects.

Margins will be managed to provide additional cover and nesting habitat for small mammals and the shrill carder bee.



Additional trees will be planted

In areas outside of the scheduled monument boundary, tree canopy will be increased linking isolated pockets of existing habitat.

A diverse array of native species will be planted in areas that are thinned and dominated by one species to provide a more diverse and resilient woodland.



The existing calcareous grassland will be improved and increased

Scrub removal and invasive species management will ensure the spread of the grassland supporting a wide range of specialist plants and insects.



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Heritage protection

Historic England are the statutory body in charge of protected historic buildings and landscapes in England. Ham Hill is designated as a Scheduled Monument by Historic England due to its wealth of historical importance.

In 2019 Historic England put Ham Hill on the 'at risk' register due to the deterioration of the heritage features.

To address the deterioration and to conserve the heritage of Ham Hill in the future we want to:



Restore species rich calcareous grassland to the top ramparts on the Northern Spur



Complete path maintenance works to prevent the ramparts from being eroded further



Carry out specialist conservation repair works to the Lime Kiln



Continue with the repair of the dry stone walls across the site



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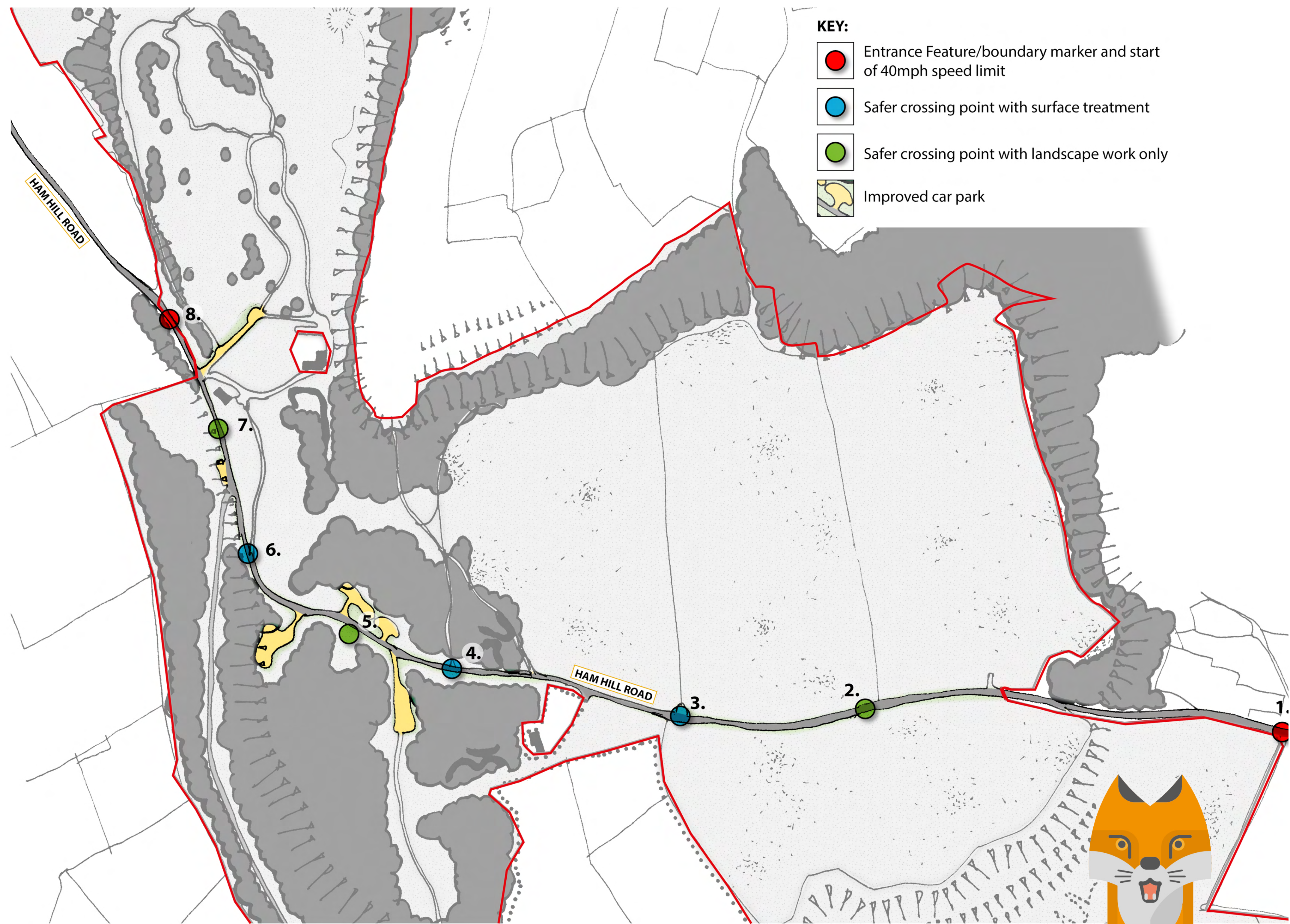
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Highway improvements

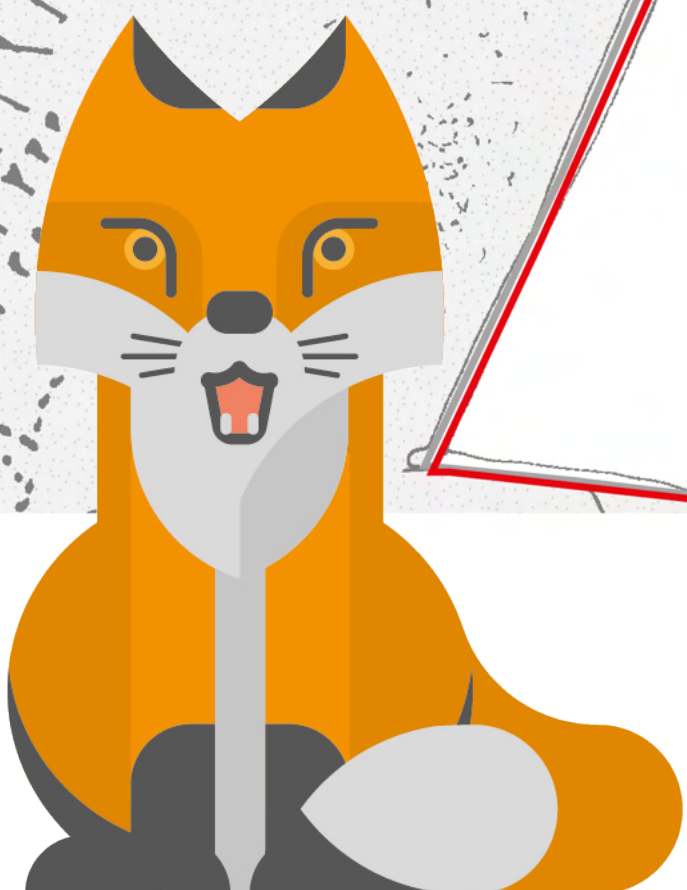
The Ranger team at Ham Hill have long recognised the issues caused by the road running through the middle of the Country Park. There have been a number of accidents and numerous minor incidents. As part of this project we are seeking to limit speed and improve safety for users of the Country Park.

To make the road on Ham Hill safer for all users we want to:

- Reduce the speed limit across the top of Ham Hill from the current national speed limit (60mph) to 40 mph
- Provide new entrance markers to the Country Park to create a 'gateway' onto Ham Hill so that motorists know they have arrived on a special site, akin to the gateways seen in National Parks.
- Provide signed and marked (with a different road surface) key crossing points for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders
- Improve visibility for motorists when leaving the car parks
- Create a new stone path that is adjacent to the highway in between the car park area for pedestrians
- Improve capacity of the existing car parks by minor design changes



An application to Somerset County Council for permission for these improvements has been submitted.



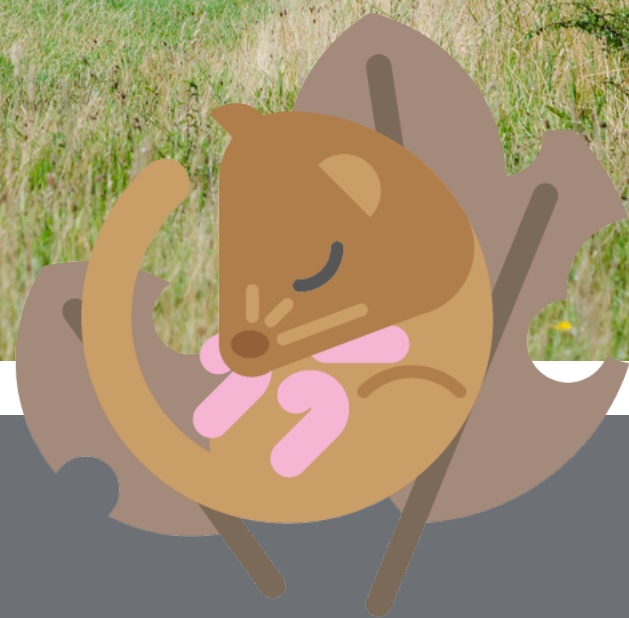
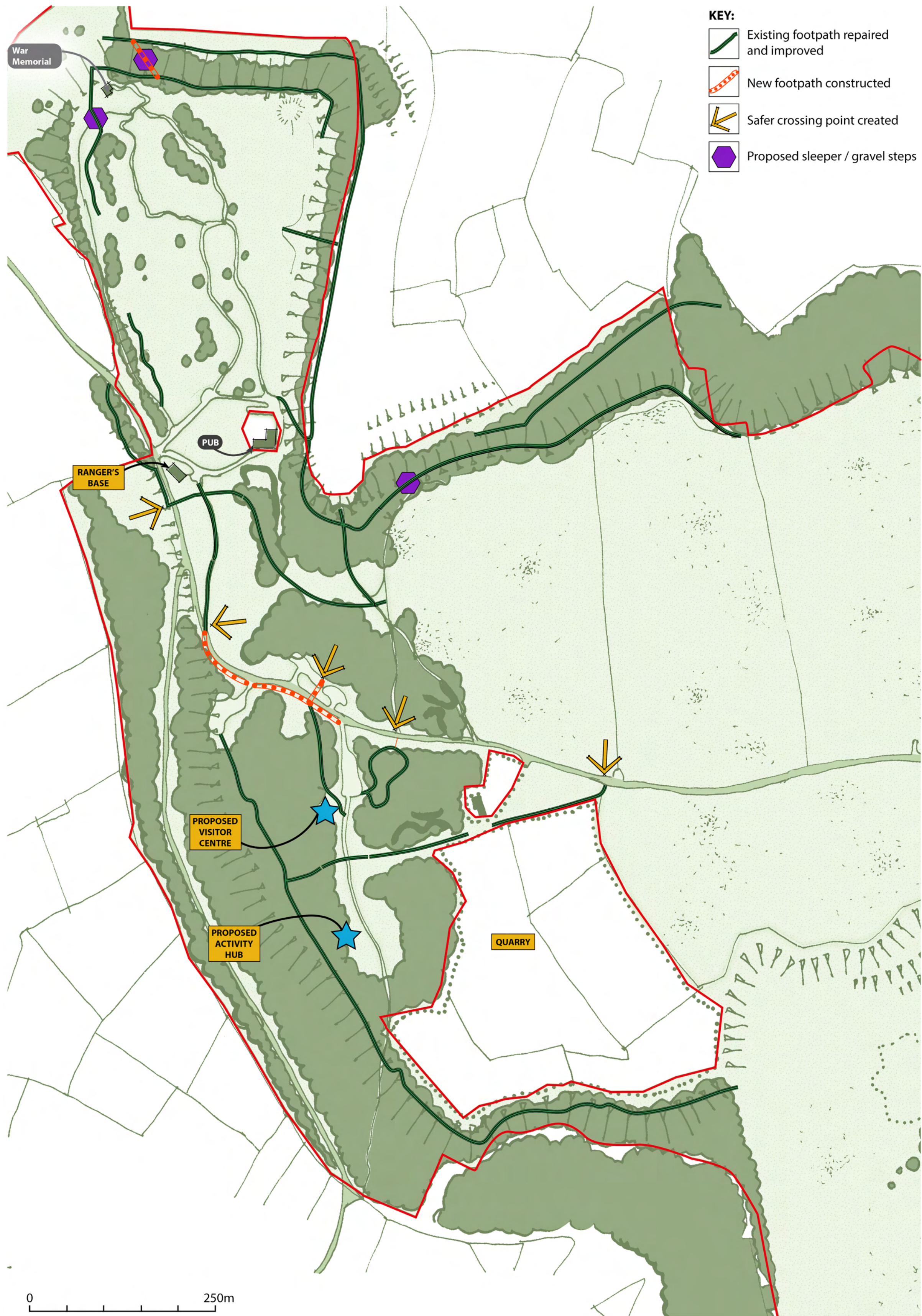
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Access improvements



The map below shows how we will improve access for visitors by repairing existing paths, creating new paths and adding steps to some of the steepest slopes.



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Visitor centre

Ham Hill has no welcome and information point for visitors to the country park. The existing Rangers and Education Centre is a workbase for the staff and volunteer team that manage the site and it is not open to visitors.

The Pop-Up Museum that was held at the existing Education Centre in 2019 showed a real need and desire from visitors to have somewhere to find out more about Ham Hill and to take part in activities.

It is hoped that a visitor centre will be located at the back of Lime Kiln car park and will comprise;



A welcome and information point



Exhibition space



Multi-purpose learning space



A café



A changing places facility



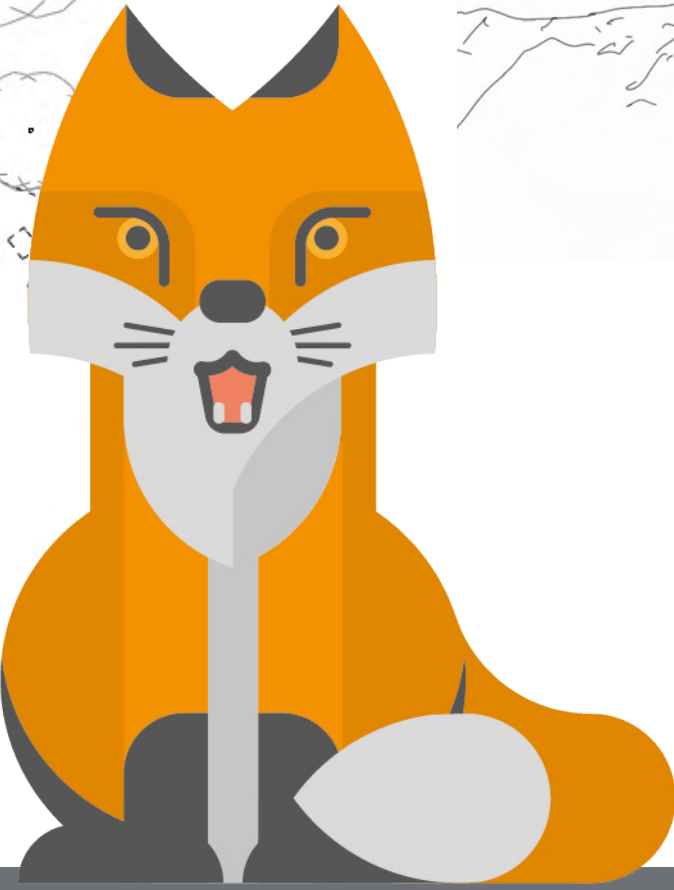
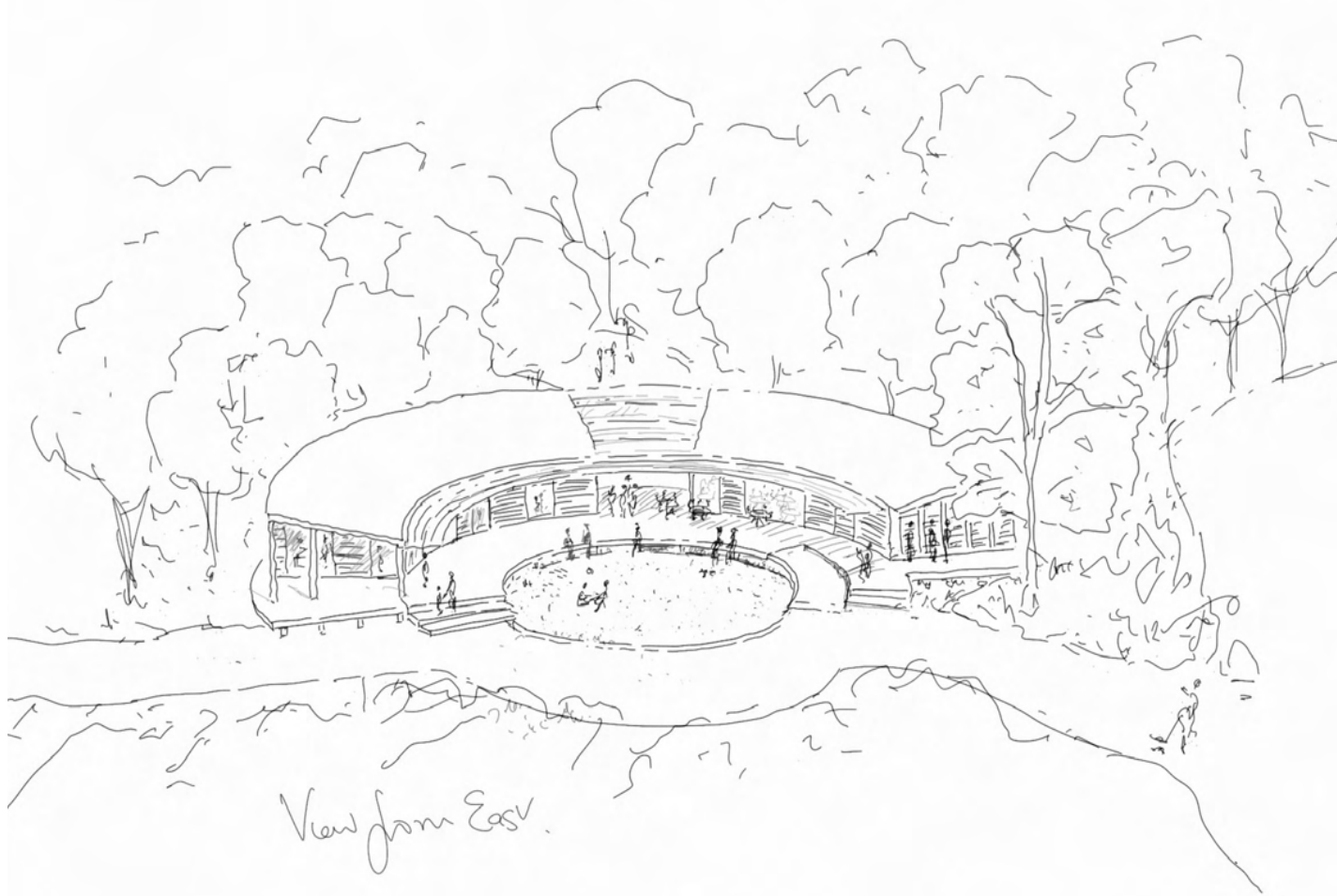
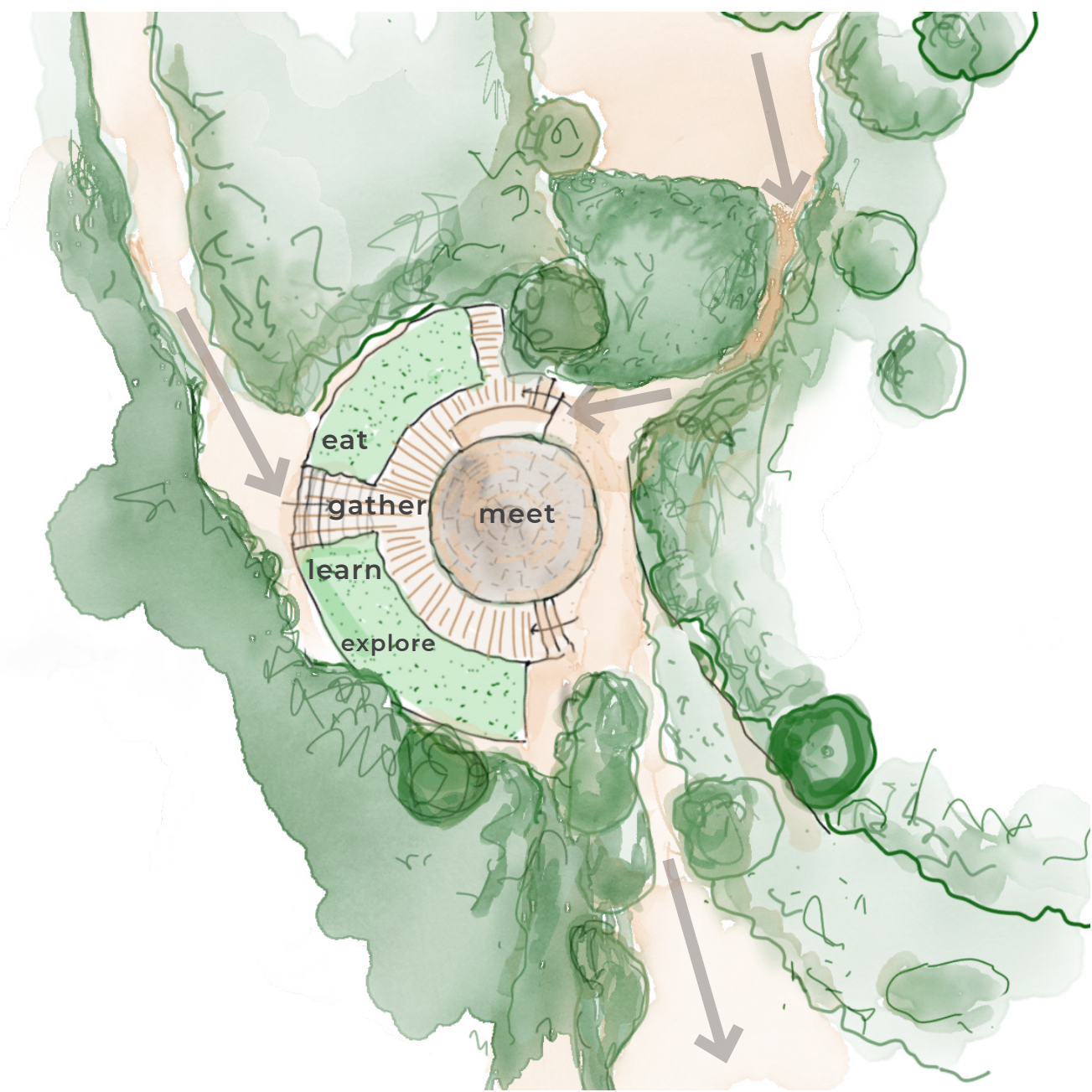
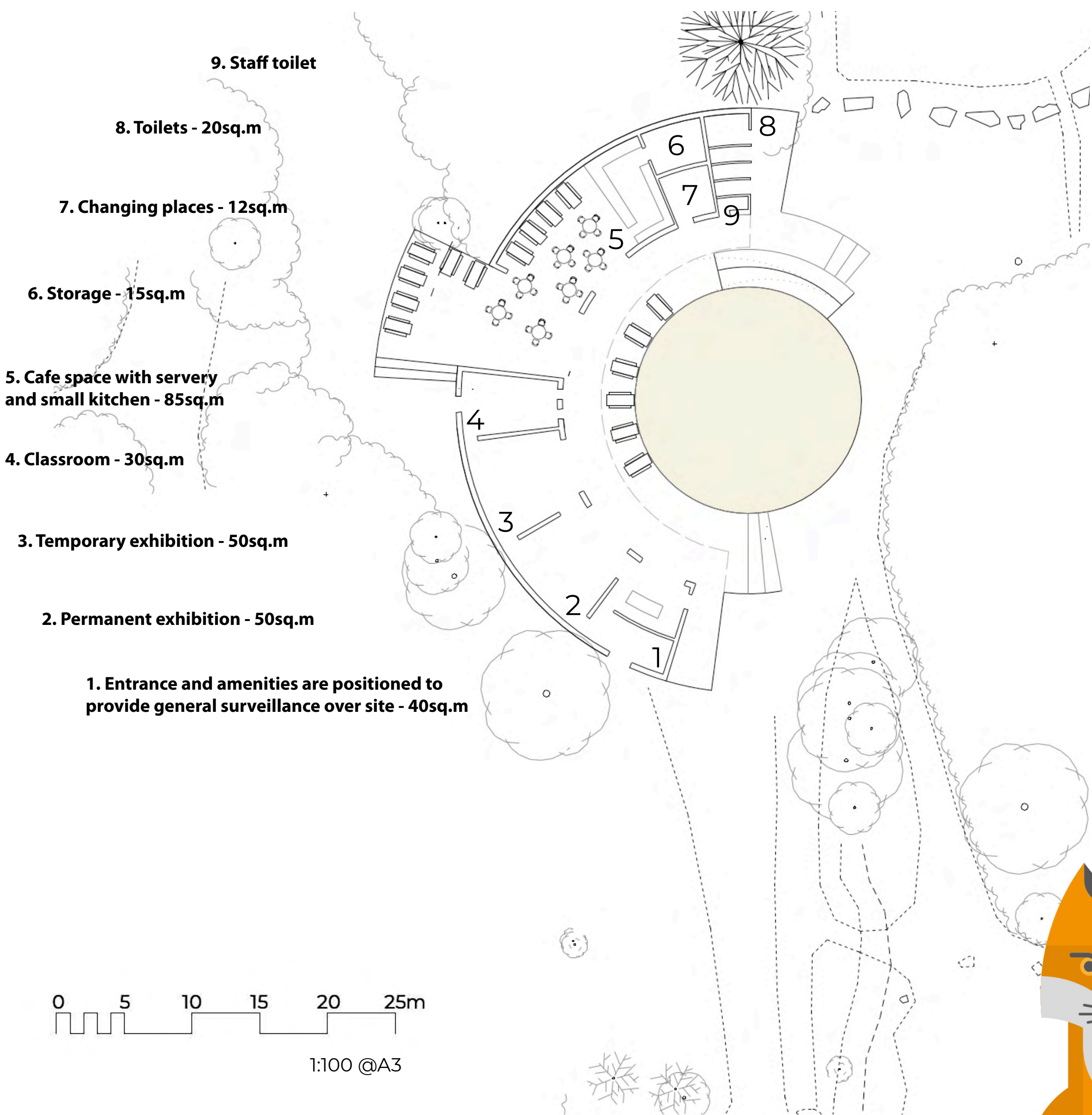
New public toilets

The building will be of low environmental impact, utilising green technologies wherever feasible and contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain.

The building is subject to planning permission and scheduled monument consent.

The plans

Please note that these are early stage indications of how the visitor centre may look. Detailed designs will be developed as the project progresses.

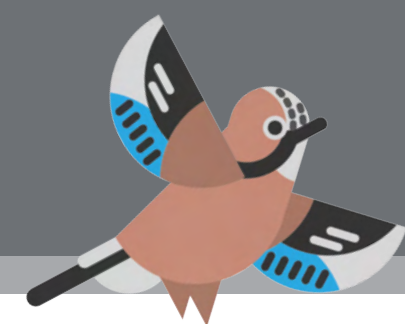


“Architecture is essentially an extension of nature into the man-made realm, providing the ground for perception and the horizon of experiencing and understanding the world.”

- Juhani Pallasmaa -

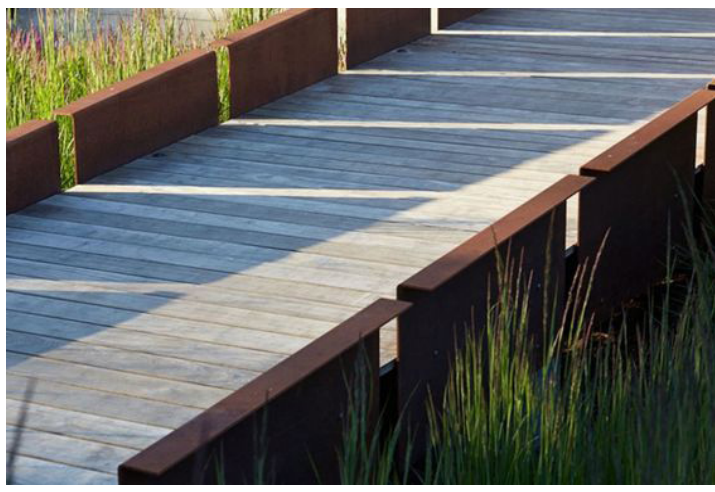
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Design Overview - Visitor Centre

Please note: These images are indicative of the style of the visitor centre only at this stage.



*Tread
Lightly*



Chedworth Roman Villa Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios



Sizergh Castle Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

Visitor centre landscape

The area around the visitor centre including the car park, will also be improved to provide better infrastructure for visitors, improved habitats and more creative activity & learning spaces.

In the existing Lime Kiln car park we want to:



Install EV charging points



Create disabled access parking



Create a bus drop off/pick up point

In the wider area around the visitor centre we want to:



Reduce scrub on the priority areas of calcareous grassland



Remove high risk trees such as ash that are suffering from Ash Dieback disease

To provide a creative activity and learning space we want to:



Create a covered outdoor learning area, set away from the visitor centre for outdoor crafts and skills activities. The centre will be constructed of natural materials and open sided with space for a fire pit and a roof to protect from the weather.

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Branding and communication

As part of the project Ham Hill will get a design overhaul from the country park logo to the on-site signage, with a consistent theme throughout. We are working with specialist design consultants to create an identity for Ham Hill.

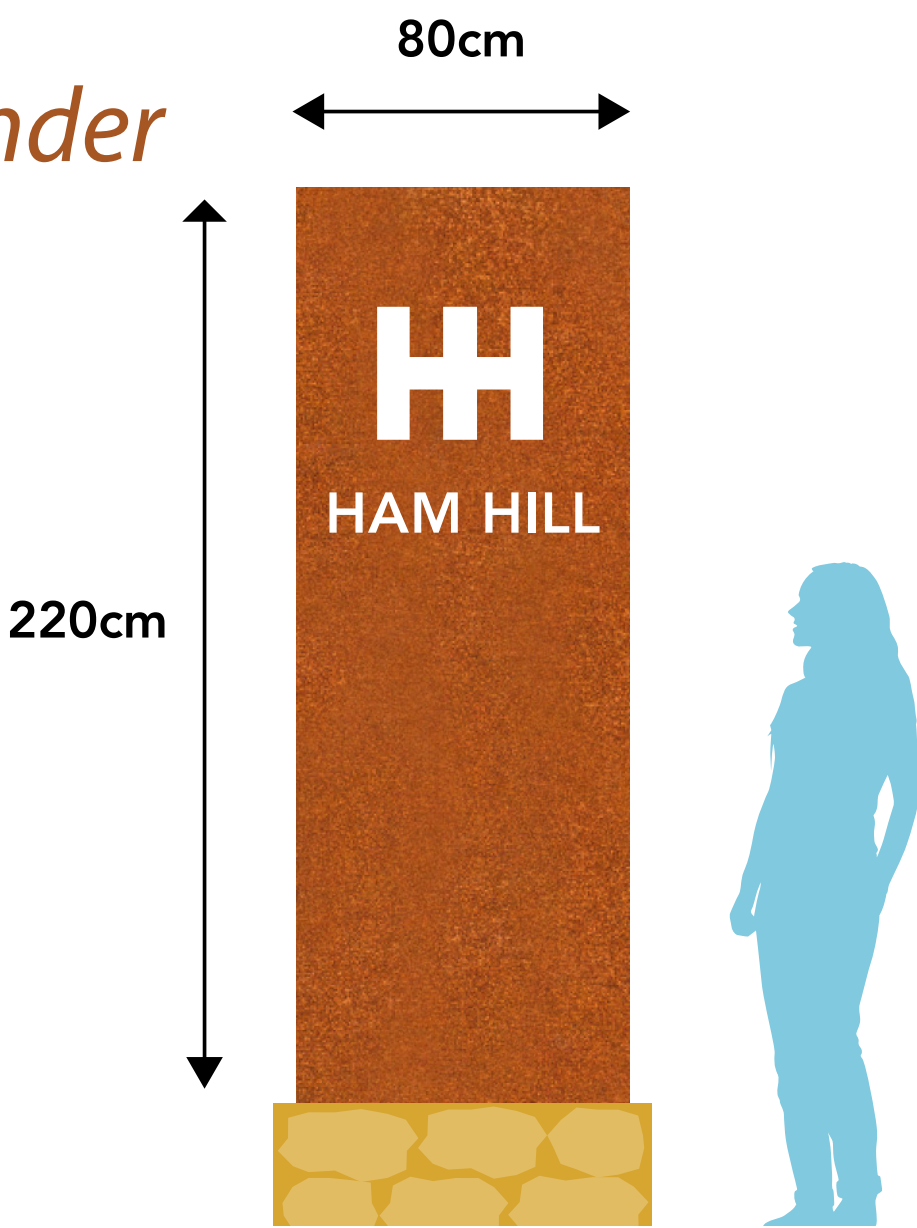
Please note: the images below are indicative of style & materials only at this stage. Details & final design will be decided during the next stage of the project.

Concept

A light touch scheme, slender yet substantial

A consistent character with distinctive shaping and materials throughout will define a sense of place for visitors old and new. Example shows a boundary marker from the East approach.

Minimum text = Maximum clarity
for vehicles passing at speed



Materials

Contemporary materials that age well



CorTen
Long life + very low maintenance
Vibrant colour similar to Hamstone
Graffiti & sticker repellent
Reminiscent of the industrial heritage



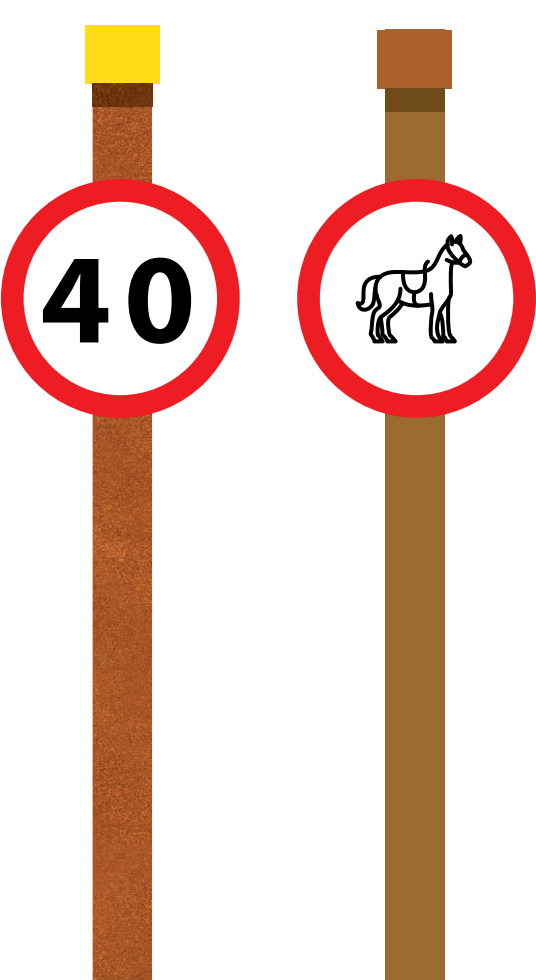
Wood
Natural
Available locally
Used both indoors and outdoors



Coated Steel
Vibrant
Easily seen
Reads well from distance

Volume of content

Appropriate to location



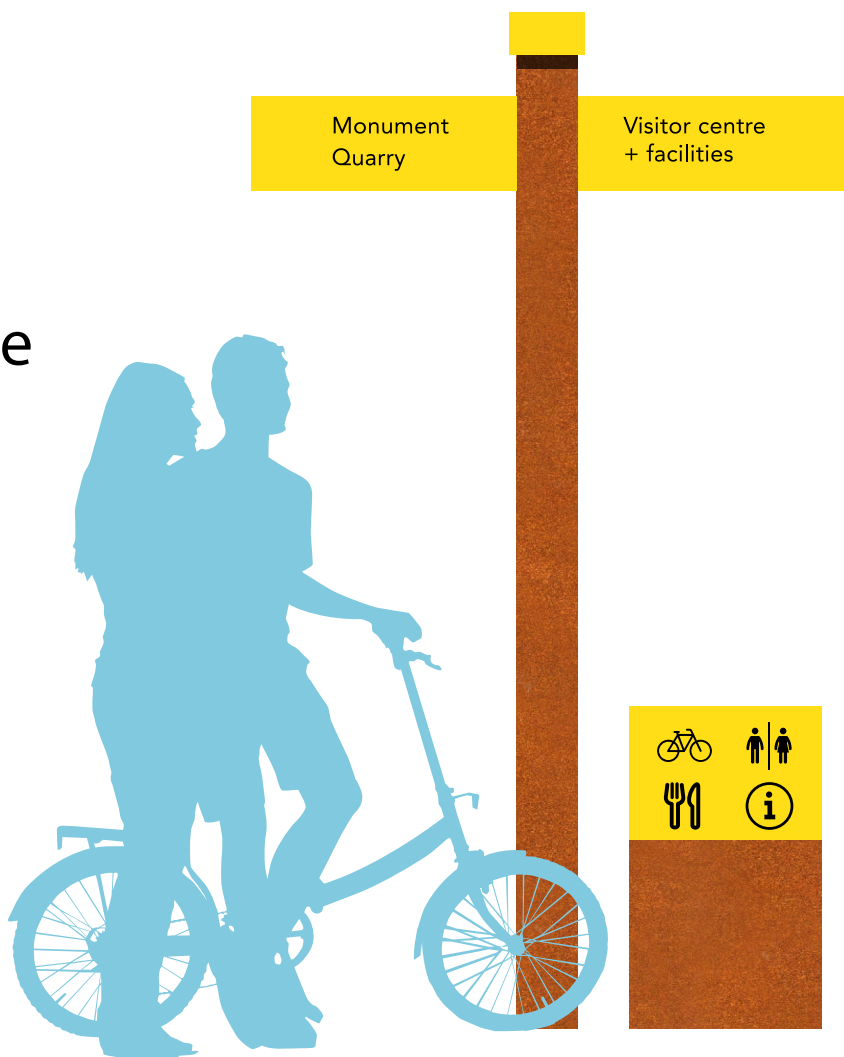
Entrance
Boundary markers
/ Speed

Car parks & Meeting points
Minimum Facilities
Localising
Notices / QR

Wayfinding
Directional / Trail
IDs

Wayfinding & Interpretation

Example shows fingerpost and bollard. Simple, clear text, considered positioning / heights and icons ensure usable by all regardless of age or ability.

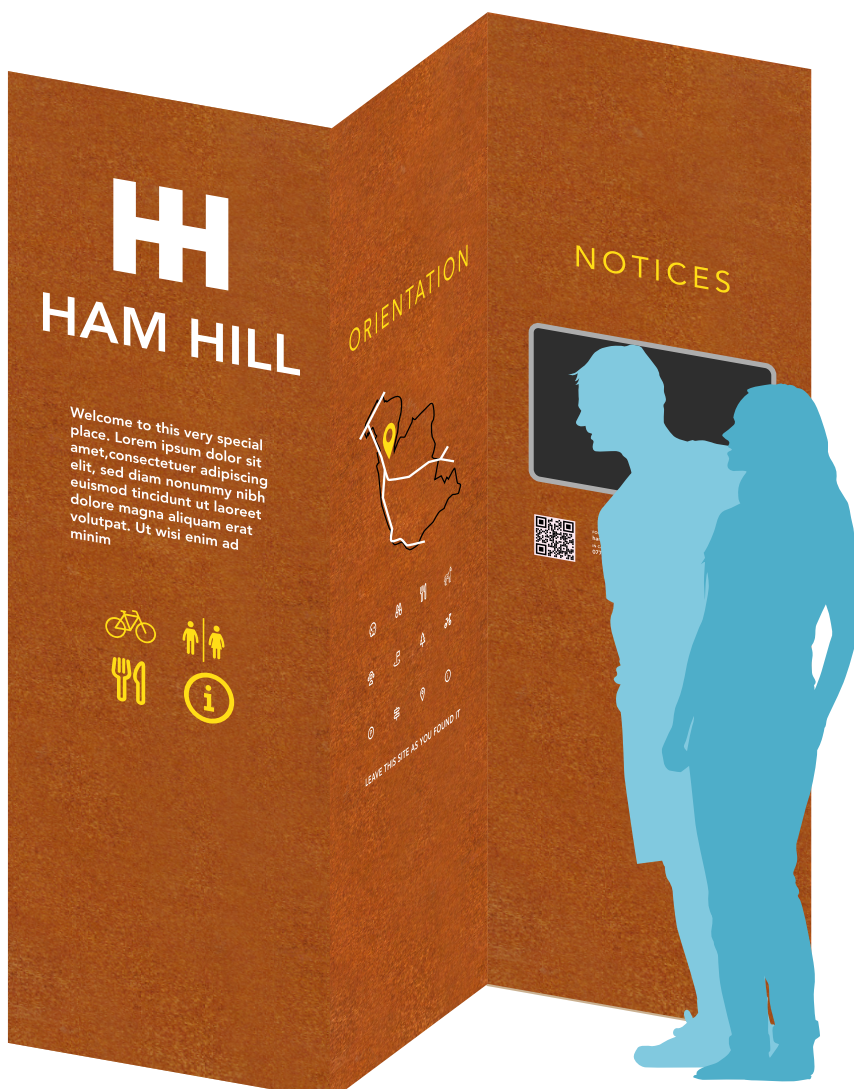


Care will be taken to ensure all panels and furniture are "minimal and unobtrusive"

Example shows a car park information panel. Tall and thin, the concertina design allows for appropriate volume of content per panel. Design allows for two sides of information.

Themes of history, geology, wildlife. Simplified map with features or distances, and QR codes to access digital content.

Notice space for changeable content.



Digital links
Interpretation will appear on site, on-line and in print. Example shows sound link to skylarks at Ham Hill.



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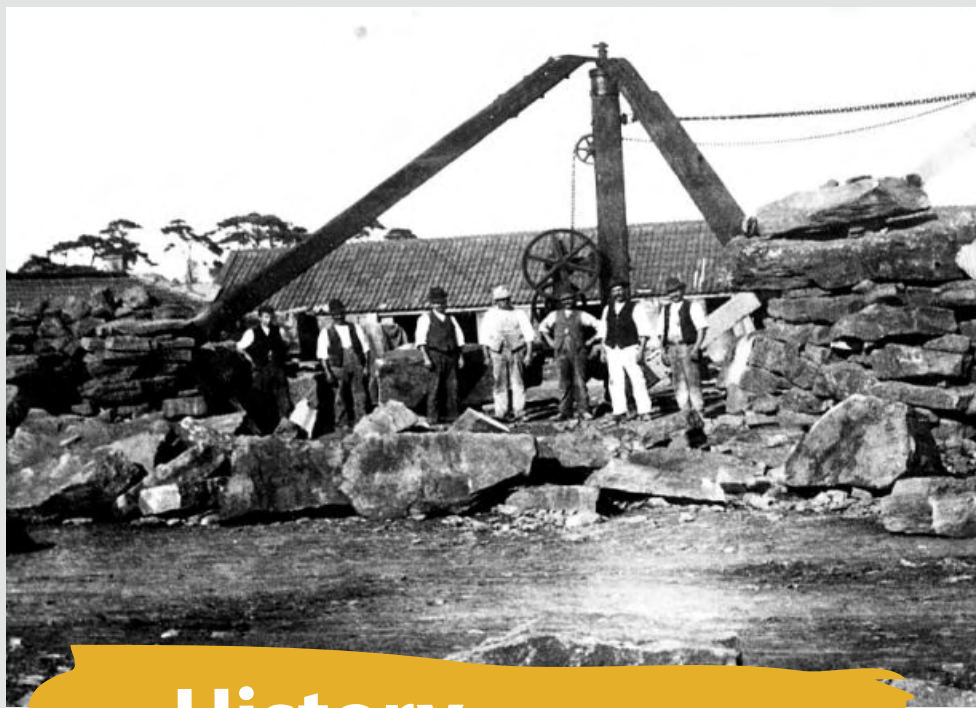
The story of Ham Hill

The story of Ham Hill is a powerful one and spans through the millennia from its creation as a hill, to a site of Iron Age and then Roman occupation to a centre for Victorian Quarrying and into the wildlife haven it is today. There are some main themes to cover in telling the story of Ham Hill:



Geology

How the hill was created



History

Iron Age hillfort, Roman encampment, Medieval Village, Victorian through to modern day quarrying



Ecology

The wildlife of Ham Hill
The habitats of Ham Hill



Ham Hill today

How is the site managed
How to visit the site responsibly

The way in which we share these stories with visitors will be covered using a variety of creative methods including:



On site interpretation



Exhibitions in the visitor centre – permanent and temporary



Trail maps and exploration guides, including digital resources such as audio and film



Website



Activities and events



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Activity Proposals



Despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021 the Ham Hill rangers managed to deliver a small programme of organised activities including the Ham Hill dog show and an extremely popular bonfire event.



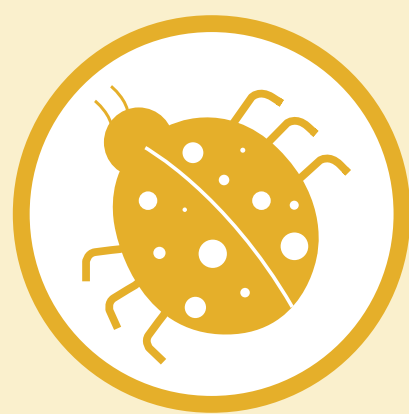
Engagement Ranger: Our development of activities has been assisted by the temporary employment of a new Engagement Ranger funded by the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund for Heritage. This funding support and role has now ended but the intention through the project is to employ a permanent Engagement Ranger to lead on an exciting programme of existing and new activities and initiatives.

Our existing programme will be enhanced to include:



Family friendly events

Ham Hill bonfire, dog show, bat walks, fungi forays



Events for children

Fire lighting, den building, wild food, spoon carving, bug hunting, arts and crafts, axe throwing



Events for adults

Wild food – finding and cooking, arts and crafts, guided walks



Events organised by others at Ham Hill

Running races, orienteering, charity walks, climbing, mountain bike skills



Community groups

Brownies, guides, scouts, children's birthday parties



Schools and colleges

Led and self-led activities – history, geology, ecology



Traditional management training

Hedgelaying, dry stone walling, coppicing

We also want to encourage and support people who do not normally visit Ham Hill. Over the last year and a half we have talked to many groups and individuals and run trial sessions at Ham Hill. Our target groups include:

- people living with disabilities including hidden disabilities such as groups from MIND, Cambian College and the Balsam Centre
- people in need of skills building and training through partnerships with providers such as Kingston Maurward College
- young people and schools such as Stanchester School and Castle School
- people from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds such as Polinia and Friends



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Activity Proposals



Volunteers play a critical role in all aspects of managing Ham Hill. We want to expand these opportunities by:

- Delivering additional practical management task days including corporate volunteering days
- Increase the membership of the Friends of Ham Hill
- Providing new opportunities:
 - as a welcome guide at the visitor centre
 - manning a small gift shop
 - as a volunteer visitor guide out on site
 - undertaking wildlife and visitor surveys
 - helping at events

As part of the volunteer offer, we will provide appropriate training as required.



In addition to extra grant funded rangers, we are also investigating transport options such as use of a Community Bus and an electric bus shuttle service from Stoke Sub Hamdon to connect with the regular service bus from Yeovil.

Through the project we will also secure funding to develop apprenticeships, these will build young people's skills and provide the foundation to a future career in heritage management and operations.



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Activities to try



Ham Hill's Frosty February Family Fun

Perfect pottery and melty marshmallows await you!

Visit the Ham Hill countryside team this February half term for **free** woodland craft mornings.

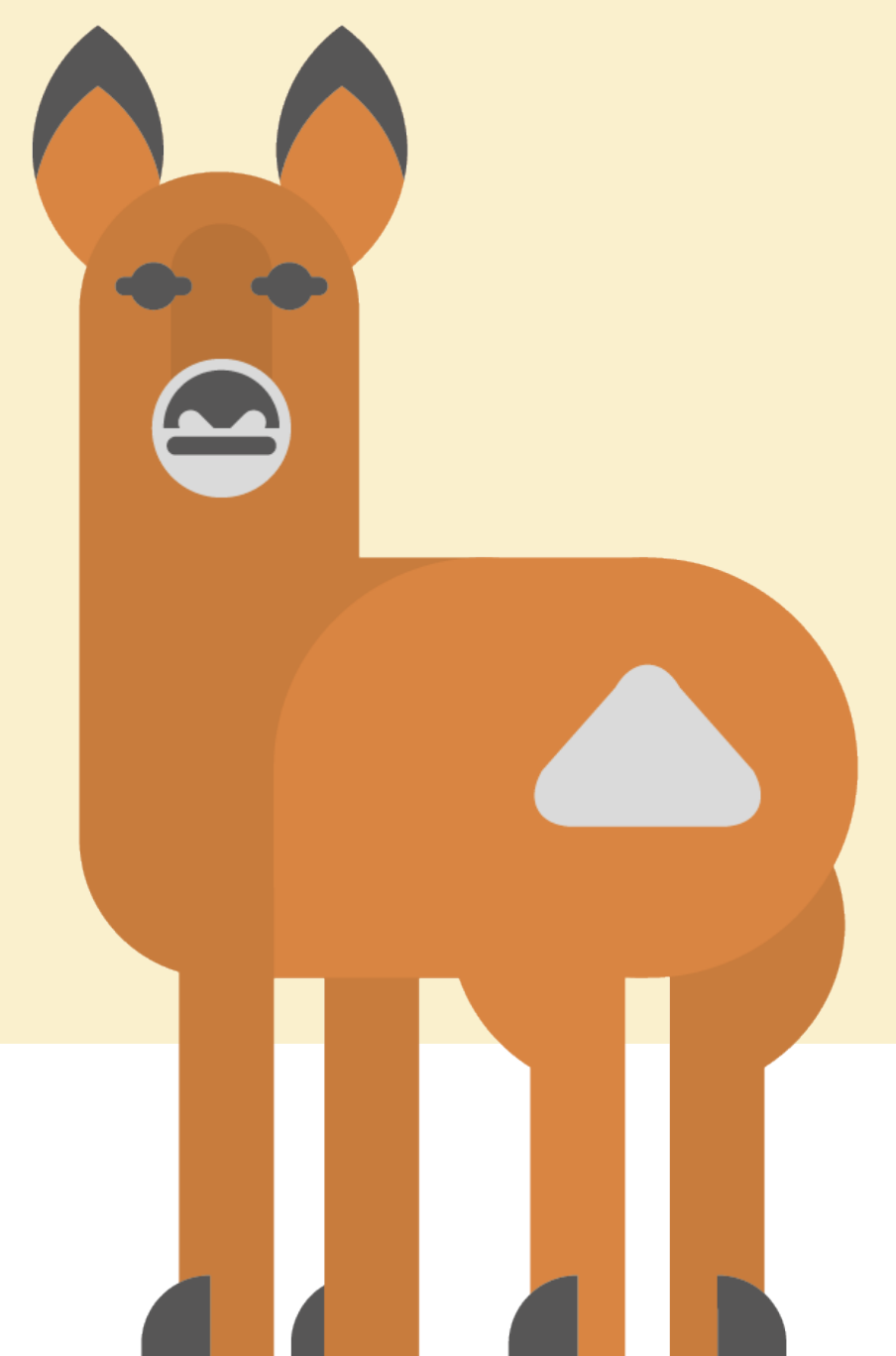
Date: Saturday 19th to Friday 25th of February

Time: 9:30am to 1:00pm

Location: Wildwood Play Zone, at the bottom of the steps in front of the pub.

Join us in the Wildwood Play Zone, where you can sculpt your own pottery, and fire it on a bonfire kiln! Why have fun around in the play zone or chomp down on a toasted marshmallow while your clay cooks?

See you there!

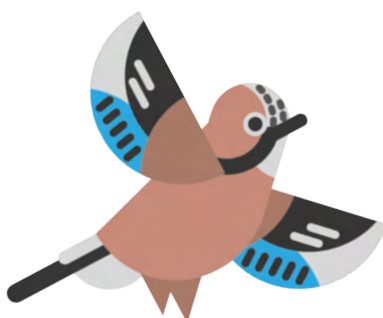


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Share your thoughts

Grab a post it note and use the space below to stick it on and tell us what you think about the project and also what you love about Ham Hill.



Get involved

If you want to feedback about the project proposals you have read here today please complete the online questionnaire by visiting www.visitsouthsomerset.com or scanning the QR code.

Or speak to a member of staff and let us know your thoughts and ask us any questions.

Thank you!



Scan me!